

VZCZCXRO8010
PP RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHSB #0254/01 0871643
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 281643Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1303
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 1544
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 1402
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 1548
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0217
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0811
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1174
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 1603
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4007
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1373
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 2031
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0673
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC//DHO-7//
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1765
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK//DOOC/ECMO/CC/DAO/DOB/DOI//
RUEPGBA/CDR USEUCOM INTEL VAIHINGEN GE//ECJ23-CH/ECJ5M//

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000254

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR S. HILL
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN
USAID FOR M. COPSON AND E. LOKEN
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/28/2017

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: POLICE RAID MDC HQ, BRIEFLY DETAIN TSVANGIRAI

REF: HARARE 00246 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher Dell under Section 1.5 b/d

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) Scores of riot police cordoned off several blocks around MDC headquarters in downtown Harare on March 28 and invaded MDC offices. The police actions came just before MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai was to hold a press conference to address the abductions of several MDC leaders in the preceding 24 hours. Police seized computers and files and arrested numerous MDC officials and staffers. Tsvangirai was detained for several hours at MDC headquarters before being released unharmed. One of the MDC leaders abducted was badly beaten and is now in hospital. The whereabouts of two others remain unknown. An MDC MP and his wife were assaulted in their home, but managed to escape their assailants. End Summary.

Police Raid MDC Offices, Detain Tsvangirai

¶2. (SBU) A day after Morgan Tsvangirai delivered a defiant call for the ouster of President Mugabe at the memorial service for the opposition activist killed by police on March 11 (reftel), scores of riot police cordoned off several blocks around the MDC headquarters in downtown Harare. Police then entered the building and ransacked MDC offices just before Tsvangirai was to hold a press conference to address the abductions of several opposition leaders.

13. (SBU) According to MDC sources, police knocked down doors, seized computers and files, and arrested a number of MDC officials and staffers. Police detained Tsvangirai during the raid, but released him before taking others to the police station. According to our sources, police were interrogating the detainees about information contained in computers and files. Some of the detainees were released when police determined they were not associated with the seized materials. Lawyers have been denied access to the detainees.

Lawyers Served Notice to Back off or Else

14. (C) According to the MDC,s lawyers, when they attempted to enter MDC offices to represent their clients, police threatened to arrest them. One of the lawyers, Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights lawyer Otto Saki told us that he and others had been receiving threatening phne calls throughout the day. Saki said the lawyrs said they still had not been granted access to those detained as of nightfall in Harare. He andhis colleagues have petitioned the High Court for n order to grant them access and/or to release the detainees.

Abductions and Assaults Aimed to Intimidate

15. (SBU) Tsvangirai,s press conference was to have brought attention to a recent series of abductions and beatings of MDC officials. Last Maengahama, a member of the MDC national

HARARE 00000254 002 OF 002

executive, was abducted at gun point from a shopping center by unknown assailants shortly after the memorial service for Gift Tandare on March 27 (reftel). At the service, he had led mourners in a song at the request of Tsvangirai. He was found that same night badly beaten in a village about 80 KMs outside of Harare and taken to a nearby hospital. Maengahama was later transferred to a hospital in Harare.

16. (C) Maengahama told us on March 28 that he was blind-folded and beaten by several people. He said they repeatedly asked him questions about the opposition's plans and the names of its organizers. Maengahama added that at one point he felt something like a needle prick. He then began to convulse and his assailants fled.

17. (SBU) According to the MDC, unknown assailants also took Ian Makoni, an advisor to Tsvangirai, and his wife, Theresa, an MDC provincial official, from their home on the night of March 27. There whereabouts are unknown. Also on March 27, Edward Chisvuvure, MDC MP for Budiriro, and his wife, were assaulted in their home. Their assailants accused them of being involved in recent petrol bombings. The Chisvuvures managed to escape.

18. (C) Frances Lovemore, director of Counseling Services Unit (CSU), told us that the abductions and assaults were most likely carried out by a "hit squad" of ZANU-PF thugs. She said that Saviour Kasukuwere, Deputy Youth Development Minister and MP for Mt. Darwin, was rumored to be the principal organizer of the hit squad. Kasukuwere was a Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) operative before a meteoric rise within the ruling ZANU-PF party that eventually saw him become an MP and deputy minister. Also, Kasukuwere was the MP who reportedly paid for the burial of Tandare's body in Mt. Darwin after it was seized from the deceased's family (reftel).

Comment

19. (C) The raid on MDC headquarters appears to have had a

two-fold purpose: to prevent a press conference exposing the GOZ-sponsored abductions and to either find evidence of MDC participation in recent violence, or, more likely, to plant evidence of such involvement. However, we would argue that the GOZ has once again shot itself in the foot. After a lull in press attention, the government,s proclivity for brutal violence is again in the news) and on the eve of the SADC Extraordinary Summit. End Comment.
SCHULTZ